

SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF FARM-POPULATION DENSITY
 IN THE NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS 1/

Farm population in this region ranges from more than 20 persons per square mile to less than one. The problem of rural people in maintaining adequate services varies with the density of the farm population; community life as well as rural services are conditioned by the number of farm families per square mile, the local roads, etc. There are variations, of course, within counties which do not show up in the county data used in this map of the region.

The Plains environment imposes two conditions: Rural community activities and service facilities must be adapted to the sparse population and the Plains will have its own residence pattern. As population has adjusted toward a better balance between people and land it has meant that schools, roads, farm electrification, churches, marketing, health facilities, and other services can now be provided only with great difficulty, in large areas of the Plains. But such services are important in the level of living of farm people.

The delineation on this map of three farm-population density areas in the Northern Great Plains attempts to set forth graphically the broad social environments or "climates" where distinctive adjustments must somehow be made by rural people if efficient community life is to be attained. The following generalizations are based upon arbitrary judgment only, but they grow out of wide observation of rural life in the region.

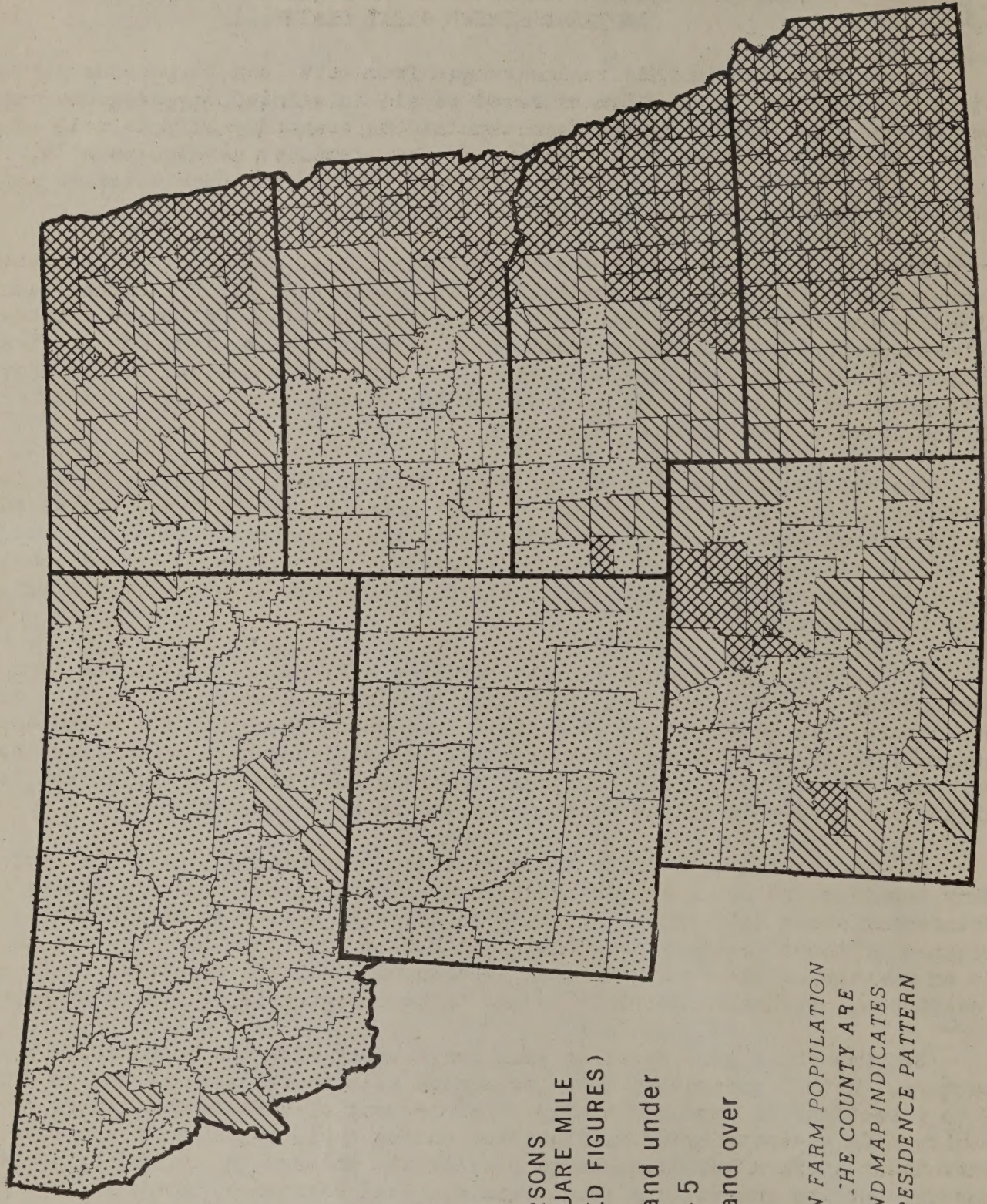
1. In the first area efficient services and community life for farm people present the least difficulty. With farm population averaging 6 persons or more per square mile families are generally close enough together for efficient community life if services are well adapted. Communities need to examine their present services critically to make sure that technological advances and modern levels of living are available to the whole community on an economical basis.

2. The second area calls for a modified conventional residence pattern. Many counties are doing long-range highway planning, and some are systematically abandoning about half of the original roads, with a view to more adequate maintenance of those that are essential. With 3 to 5 persons per square mile there is an average of one family to each section of land, and a pattern of line residences, at 2-mile intervals, seems to be emerging in some localities.




3. The third area seems to call for a break with the traditional residence pattern. With 2 persons or less per square mile there is an average of from 2 to 8 sections of land per family. Development of efficient services or community life presents great difficulties unless basic adjustments are made. Investment in farm buildings makes precipitate changes in the residence pattern costly, but the innovations (town farming, dual residence, etc.) appearing in some localities suggest that further adjustments may be made. As far as possible, farm or ranch headquarters should be located where they can best take advantage of surfaced or graded roads giving access to needed services. As farm people adopt higher standards of rural living, traditional concepts of farm and community life may be gradually changed to fit the environment better.

1/ The Dakotas, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska and Wyoming. 1940 Census.
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VARYING FARM-POPULATION DENSITY IN THE NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS



PERSONS
PER SQUARE MILE
(ROUNDED FIGURES)

-  2 and under
-  3 - 5
-  6 and over

VARIATIONS IN FARM POPULATION
DENSITY WITHIN THE COUNTY ARE
DISREGARDED AND MAP INDICATES
ONLY GENERAL RESIDENCE PATTERN

SOURCE: 1940 CENSUS